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Felicien David, Prince Poniatowski, Kastner, Gevaët, Jules Cohen, Eugene Gautier, Edouard Thierry, de Saint-George, Jules Barbier, Ernest Lepine, secretary, Ramond, joint-secretary, and for the foreigner, de MM. Sorrento di Fuentes and Dr. Herschling. The Commission have set apart four sittings for the examination of "one hundred and two" cantatas sent to the concourse. Each sitting lasted from nine o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the evening. Besides the prize awarded to M. Saint-Saëns, three cantatas received a mention. Their titles will be published; and, owing to this indication, their composers will be able to make themselves known, if they should desire to do so. The same jury, after examining the *hymns*, of which there were eight hundred and twenty-three, declared that there had been no reason for awarding a prize.

(From the London Musical World.)

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

On Saturday night the first appearance of Mdle. Christine Nilsson, the much-talked-of Swedish lady from the Théâtre-Lyrique in Paris, drew together the most crowded and brilliant audience that, during the present season, has assembled within the walls of the "Old House." The opera selected for an occasion of such paramount interest to the fortunes of the establishment was the by-no-means edifying *Traviata*, notwithstanding which the success of the new-comer was never for one instance doubtful. Perhaps, before all, the cause of this might be traced to the fact that a new sensation had been experienced. The audience found themselves in presence of something young, fresh, gracefully endowed, and stamped with a certain individuality apart from the ordinary. Mdle. Nilsson is of fair complexion, the conventional type of a Swede, rather tall, slight in figure, composed and at the same time elegant in bearing, thoroughly at ease on the boards, and gifted with a voice of extended compass—a voice not powerful, but sweet and mellow, flexible, and otherwise capable, as its training already shows, and, last not least, of a quality to which the term "sympathetic" may be applied with unquestioned propriety. The earlier scenes sufficed to convince her hearers of all this, and the curtain fell at the end of the first act upon a success a legitimate as it was unanimously recognized.

That an unknown singer, a young singer, a singer the echo of whose praises on the Continent had, for two or three years past, repeatedly reached England, should be warmly welcomed was natural enough. Hearty and obstreperous as was the applause that greeted her in coming before the lamps, Mdle. Nilsson, however, seemed in no way disconcerted; and her delivery of the second verse of the "Libiamo, libiamo ne' lieti calici," of which Alfredo sings the first, showed a confidence justified by the result. The applause broke out spontaneously at the end, and the audience, longing for a repetition, scarcely gave time for the chorists to get through the share allotted to them in this gay apostrophe to friendship, love, and pleasure. The subsequent duet ("Un di felice"), where Alfredo reveals his love to Violetta, confirmed the good impression, upon which the soliloquy of the "Traviata," wonder-struck at finding herself the object of a pure idolatry ("E strano! è strano!"), the plaintive air that follows ("Ah fors'è lui che l'anima"), and, most striking of all,

the animated last movement ("Sempre libera degg'io folleggiare di gioia in gioia"), when the unhappy one, having by a violent effort, dispelled the illusion, once more vows to dedicate her life to pleasure, set the seal. After this facile and brilliant display, the applause again broke out from every part of the house, and Mdle. Nilsson had twice to return before the foot-lights.

From this point to the end of the opera the success was strengthened step by step. The mock sentimental duet with the elder Germont—among all "heavy stage fathers," the most intolerable bore—and the final scene, where Violetta gradually sinks under the repeated insults of her lover, in all respects more vile and contemptible than herself, who ultimately, before the assembled guests, throws the purse containing the money he has won from the Baron at her feet, as if to buy off his own disgrace by an open and despicable outrage inflicted on the woman with whom he has shared it, brought down the curtain with renewed applause. The last act, with all its revolting details, into which we have no inclination again to enter, was for Mdle. Nilsson a renewal of the success of the first. The soliloquy in which Violetta bids adieu for ever to her dreams of happiness was given with real pathos. The unexpected interview with Alfredo, who, having expedited her end by his heartless cruelty, returns, one might imagine, with a morbid curiosity to witness her last lingering moments, and to cheat her with hopes he knows cannot be realized; the maudlin duet, "Parigi o cara," with its somewhat livelier, though less original pendant, "Gran Dio!—morir si giovane," in which the model youth of M. A. Dumas the younger once more gives fervent expression to his unhealthy passion; and the dying scene, which is the horrible and, under the circumstances, utterly unedifying catastrophe—each and all created a lively impression; and at the end Mdle. Nilsson was thrice called back amid plaudits as enthusiastic as they were uncontested. We can scarcely remember a more thoroughly successful first appearance.

Meanwhile, dismissing the *Traviata*, to which it is to be hoped there may be no future occasion of returning, we must state in *postscriptum* that, historically considered, Mdle. Nilsson's idea of Violetta is precisely the same as that with which the regretted Angiolina Bosio made the English public familiar. She represents her in every sense as a lady, the propriety and repose of whose demeanor afford little idea of the real character—at any rate in the earlier scenes. None of us can shut our eyes to the truth of what the life of this ill-chosen operatic heroine must previously have been; and though the abnormal effect produced upon her by the conditions inseparable from a love that is pure and disinterested, would naturally exercise a strong influence, it could not so absolutely metamorphose her as to make of her an entirely new creature. However, we shall not adjudge Mdle. Nilsson's claims as an actress by her performance of a single character—and that character one which many would feel a repugnance to represent, as Mdle. Piccolomini strove to represent it, to the life. Enough that as a singer she has won, by this her first effort on the Italian stage, an undisputed triumph. Her associates were Signor Mongini (Alfredo), who was suffering evidently from cold; Mr. Santley, whose "Old Germont" is about the most endurable on the

stage, and who, as a matter of course, was compelled to sing twice the lachrymose and monotonous air, "Di Provenza il mar;" Mdle. Corsi, a very good Flora; Mdle. Baumeister, an equally good Annina; Signor Bossi, the Baron; and Signor Foli, the Doctor.

THE VOLUNTARIES OF STANLEY AND KEEBLE, RUSSELL AND ROSEINGRAVE.—Of organ voluntaries none were more popular in their time than those of "Blind Stanley," but they are, as must be admitted, poor, trifling, and inappropriate, and destitute throughout "of that simplicity and grandeur which should characterize all music intended for use in public worship." Russell's voluntaries are more elaborate, and his fugues have more art than interest about them, but it has been well observed that "the smell of the theatre may be said to have passed upon his compositions for the church." Many men of very respectable acquirements have lamentably failed in writing for the organ, an instrument with which to grapple worthily demands the sole attention, and that the attention of a giant or of a genius. Keeble, a theorist and organist of repute, composed voluntaries of tolerable merit, and Dr. Greene wrote various fugues and organ pieces of considerable respectability, not forgetting many others of more or less celebrity in their profession. It seems, however, that Roseingrave, the really great organist of St. George's, Hanover Square, was the only English composer who left behind him, besides an unequalled reputation as an extemporary player in the Church style, a body of compositions which, although long neglected and nearly forgotten, are of that sterling excellence and durability of style, usually considered the attribute alone of the organ compositions of a Handel or of a Bach.

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